3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

BOOK VIII—SUPERSTITIOUS DREAD

THINGS TO BE AVOIDED (忌諱), *chi wei*

The first question of importance in Ssŭch'uan is how to gain a livelihood; the people say that every thing else is false, hunger only is real. But next to satisfying hunger, comes the great art of appeasing and hoodwinking demons. There can be little doubt that superstitious dread haunts most people from youth to old age. A young woman well known to us happened to overlay her child in the night, and next day she showed no signs of grief or trouble; on being pressed for a reason, she replied, "Oh, we must cheat the demon;" the idea being that if she had shown any sorrow, the demon would have come and taken the other child also. Much of the callous exterior of this people is not real, but put on for fear of demons.

Lucky days are chosen for almost every event of importance in life; beginning an education, starting on a journey, opening shop at New Year time, marriages, funerals, changing houses, repairing or building houses, will not only be begun on a lucky day, but in a lucky year. It has seemed to me that the day of a person's birth and the day of his death are the only events which they make no pretence at controlling.

Odd numbers are more lucky than even ones; for example, an odd number of days must elapse between a death

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

777 and a funeral, and every seventh day is observed by the women as a time for weeping till seven times is reached, and the mourning in many cases ended.

The first and fifteenth are the recognized days for worship in the temple and in the home. The seventh moon of each year is the most idolatrous of the twelve, when the spirits of the family ancestors are supposed to return and share the feast of meat and wine. The pagoda of each city, which is said to be built in the shape of a Chinese pencil and intended to govern the literary welfare of the city, has, as far as I have seen, always got an odd number of storeys. The Chinese are not without their superstitious dread of the foreigner. I have been asked many times if I could see three feet into the ground; and the call, *Yang jèn tao pao* (洋人盜寶), indicates that they believe that our eyes have wondrous powers of finding treasure which they believe lies hidden in the earth. It is quite a common thing to meet a man on the road who will put his nose in his sleeve while passing lest he should smell the foreigner. The smell of the ink of a foreign book is unlucky in the house. The small print of foreign books will injure their eyes, foreigners' tea will bewitch them, etc. We shall now look at a few of the things to be avoided in classified order.

784 *Superstitions connected with the first day of the year.* On that day no one in the family may mention the words demon, tiger, cat, snake, monkey, suicide, blood, wounds, short-lived, death, sickness, son died, daughters departed, speechless, lost money ; also the following with a play on the double meaning of the words : *tuan lu*, short road, suicide; *tuan t'su*, to sever head from body ; *pu tsai*, lost, also meaning dead ; *pu hao*, not good, also meaning to be sick, etc.

On this first day the brooms of the house are carefully hidden for fear they may be used and sweep away the family inheritance. The scales for weighing vegetables are also hidden as the marks and figures make it resemble a snake. For any member of the household to have dishevelled hair on that day is very unlucky, as that is said to be how demons look, and is a bad omen for the New Year. The breaking of

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

a rice basin or the spilling of water in the kitchen is a very unlucky thing and is taken to mean that the family affairs will be troubled. To have a house set on fire, or for any one to mention fire on the first day is a very unlucky thing. 784

Those who are in mourning will cast away their mourning weeds for the day; but will not pay calls on that day, for fear of disturbing the weeping god. No weeping is allowed in the family on that day lest it should last throughout the year. It is very unpropitious to quarrel, sing, lose or lend an article, to catch the clothing on anything and tear it, to give a ladleful of water, or even a light to light a neighbour's fire or lamp. No one will ask for the payment of an outstanding account on New Year's day for fear they may become beggars. Neither will they sell or allow anything to go out of the house for the same reason. Money is given to beggars on New Year's day, having been previously given out for the express purpose. The practice of sitting on another person's door-step is deeply resented by some families at all times; others do not forbid men, but they would be deeply insulted if women should sit there; but on New Year's day no one is allowed to sit there as it stops the flow of wealth and hinders the passage of the spirits to and from the house. On this day the bell on the idol's shrine must not be touched by strange hands; if an outsider should dare to disturb the family gods he will be severely dealt with for his trouble. To tell any person on New Year's day that he has *pei shih*, or turned his back on the times, is a very serious insult, as it means the family affairs will be unlucky throughout the year.

Continual fears of all classes. The proverb says, *chu lai ch'iung, kou lai fu:* the coming of a pig into the house betokens poverty, and the advent of a dog betokens riches; the reason given for this is that the pig only sleeps and eats, whereas the dog protects the family. But if a dog goes in and out of the house barking for no apparent cause this is reckoned to be very unlucky. It is said that a dog is an ancestor in another form and the name can be read on its belly; for this reason hardly anyone will kill a dog. This idea seems to have had its origin in the following. A dying man

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

• 784 owed another family five hundred cash, which he promised to return and pay. Soon after his death a litter of puppies came into the house, and on the belly of one was written the name of the man to whom the money was owing; the puppy was given to him and his family became rich.

In connection with the pig there are some curious ideas, which seem to have been imported by Buddhism, such as the following: 曾見孫孫娶祖母爺皮彌鼓打諸親鍋內煮—Already I have seen the grandson marry the grandmother, and the grandfather's skin acting as a drum at the ceremony; while the whole of the friends (become pork) were boiling in the pot to be eaten at the feast. This is transmigration of souls in earnest! If a pig becomes unsettled and snorts in and out of the sty or gets out of the sty and away this is a very unlucky sign; as it may be that it is threatened with an attack of the pig's epidemic. For the last forty years the pigs have been smitten with a disease spoken of as the *huo yin tzŭ wên* (火印子瘟), or the fire-stamp epidemic; this disease is peculiar and is easily known by the large red marks all over the body of the pig just like the stamp from an official seal. The Chinese say that this is done by demons, and it is attributed to a movement among the soldiers of Hades, and for some years it has been feared that human beings would be afflicted by the epidemic. Is it possible that this is an attempt of the disembodied spirits to gain an entrance to the body of the pig? It is often said of a pig if it thrives well, that it is a *huan chang ti* (還帳的), that is, someone who owed them or their forefathers some money, come back in the form of a hog to repay the debt.

If a cat comes to the house it is a sign that the mourning clothes will soon be needed. If a cow comes it is also a bad omen; the fear is that some murder or accident involving life may happen, and therefore the animal is seized and kept till a fine is paid which is used to pacify the family gods and restore the peace of the house. The owner of the cow will also have to hang up a red cloth over the door of the dwelling and fire off crackers at the door as he departs with the animal.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

A horse is also very unlucky and will not be allowed to leave a house which it may have entered before the owner pays a fine.

If a cow trespasses on the ancestral graves it will also be liable to be seized and held till the spirits of the ancestors have been appeased. If a chicken comes to the house the chief fear is that people should know; thus honest people return it at once, but others either hasten to kill and eat it, or take steps to have it sold for fear of detection. When a chicken is lost the loser not infrequently suspects the right person, and will deliberately sit down and curse what is called the speckled cock, *ma hua chi chung*, or curse the spotted turtle, curse the pheasant red and curse the neighbours all round.

Chickens are often stolen by the street arabs, who kill them and make the feathers into feather dusters. The low class of inn where these rascals put up is called *chi mao tien*, chicken feather inn, so named because chickens are killed and feathers stored and manufactured there.

There is a saying which means Rather lend the chief room of a house to deposit a coffin, than lend it to anyone to hold a marriage in. A marriage and a funeral are both to be avoided unless the person belongs to the family, but a marriage held in the house is more unlucky than a funeral, and no one will allow it at any cost.

No woman from an outside family may sit on the door step of the chief room of the house. No woman who has been confined will be tolerated in another person's house till her forty days of purification have been accomplished; a woman during that time must certainly *tso yüeh* (坐月), sit one moon. No woman would dare to go near the chief room of her own house for the same length of time for fear of offending the idols.

No one may go to another person's home and weep, for fear of troubling the weeping spirit. Nor may anyone go with a fresh wound into another's house, as it is very unlucky.

When the white-necked crow makes a lot of cawing it is very unlucky; this bird is called the *kuei lao ya*, demon crow.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

777 784 When the cock goes crowing to bed or a hen crows in the yard both are reckoned unlucky. A crowing hen is a sign of misfortune, or the female taking the place of the male as head of the family. Many date the beginning of China's troubles to the time when the late Empress Dowager usurped the authority of the empire.

The repeated changing of houses is very much deprecated, as it disturbs the ancestral altar and poverty comes to those who do this. Towards the end of the year in the cold weather no one will change house for fear he will not have a suitable place to worship his ancestors at New Year time.

If the kitchen pot rings or the kitchen fire puffs and blows it is very unlucky; it is generally believed to betoken the death or sickness of some of the young women of the family.

The farmer is very particular not to enter his fields on the spring equinox lest birds should make havoc among the growing grain; neither will he thatch his house on that date lest the birds destroy his thatch. Many of the farmer class will not eat beef; they say that the ox who has borne the yoke ought not to be killed; others say the cow is an unclean animal; others that she is unlucky, and still others are afraid of another ox coming to gore them. Farm labourers and coolies are very much afraid of rain falling on their hair, the fear being that each drop becomes transformed into a louse.

The following things are avoided according to the rotation of the sexagenary cycle. The ten stems are taken first and are as follows :—

甲 Do not open granaries; fear of poverty.
乙 Do not sow or plant; seed rots.
丙 Do not build; fear of fire or workmen ceasing work.
丁 Do not use the barber; fear of boils.
戊 Do not manage the sale of property.
己 Do not touch the graves of ancestors.
庚 Do not weave cloth or make ropes.
辛 Do not manufacture condiments.
壬 Do not change irrigating sluices.
癸 Refrain from litigation.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

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The twelve branches are as follows :—

子 Do not enquire by divination.
丑 Do not buy hats and garters.
寅 Do not sacrifice to gods.
卯 Do not dig wells.
辰 Do not weep, for weeping may be protracted.
巳 Do not travel to a distance for fear of not coming back.
午 Do not thatch or make raincoats.
未 Do not eat medicine.
申 Do not sleep during the day.
酉 Do not receive guests.
戌 Do not eat dog flesh.
亥 Do not arrange marriage affairs.

The following are some of the things to be avoided by business men :—

In the early morning it is very unlucky to use the abacus, or to turn up the account books; but each morning the abacus is washed to clean away the assistants' malpractices; when the shop is opened and closed, the abacus is shaken violently to drive away demons. No one entering the shop may touch the abacus, such an act would be deeply resented by many. The abacus is not generally used for business purposes before breakfast. Anyone trying to force a reckoning before breakfast will be suspected of an evil intention.

Such common things as ears ringing, sneezing, hot ears, hot face, clothing caught and torn, heart quivering, all betoken family quarrels and general bad luck throughout the day or even the year. The upsetting of a basin of rice on the table or elsewhere is very unlucky, and to take any person's rice-steamer and empty it on the ground is one of the greatest insults that can be given to a family. The twitching of the eye-lashes has deep significance.

Brick and tile-makers have a superstitious dread of *hung* (紅), or red, as red bricks and tiles are not half the value of the black or grey coloured ones. The lime-kiln owner has a dread of the words *tao tsang* (倒賊), as this means that the limestone won't be burned through and will be returned to him.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

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vats, also *yin ch'i*, spoiled for lack of sun to dry it. If a woman during her forty days after confinement should venture near a paper factory, she will need to stand surety for the peace and prosperity of the factory for 120 days.

Fishermen dread the words *fan wang*, the net upset, also *chiao jao*, to implicate, by fishing up a human head or something else bad. The distiller dreads the words *huai kang*, that is, the butt is broken, as the wine will then lose its savour. He also fears *tuan tso*, which means that wine will be short weight.

On the fifth of the fifth moon every person reckons to lay aside work for a time; the fear is that sickness may overtake them if they don't. On the fifteenth of the seventh moon no guests are kept in the house, as the spirits of the ancestors are expected back to partake of the family feast. No debts are collected at this feast as it is purely an ancestral worship feast, and the ancestors must have their dues paid to them. This is called *t'ao ya pa chang* (討啞吧帳), the dumb asking for accounts to be paid. Perhaps readers may have noticed that in the first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth moons funerals and marriages are very rare, and no official likes to go to a new position during these months unless he is absolutely forced to by circumstances.

The first-born son of the family is never allowed to talk to or play with a pregnant woman, for fear the child's spirit should be called to be the other woman's son. Some sick persons will not see people, *chi jên* (忌人). Women avoid visitors on even days and men on odd days; there is some superstitious dread that visitors might call away their spirits. At such times a bamboo with a flag on it is stuck outside the door, and people seeing it know not to enter the house.

When a new animal has been bought and taken home, a dirty person is not allowed to lead it into the stable, nor is a lazy person allowed to feed it, for fear the animal should get degraded through contact with them.

In arranging the position of a bed in a bed-room, it is never put facing the door as that is how a coffin is placed.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

784 On entering a tea-shop it is very unlucky to upset your own tea or to see a tea-cup upset by another.

777 [783] Boatmen, when starting on a journey, always choose a lucky day for the crew to come on board, the sacrifice to be made and the boat started. The sacrificial chicken is intoxicated before it is killed, wine being poured down its gullet; when slain, the blood is sprinkled on the prow of the boat and the feathers stuck to it as a witness of the transaction. On the journey demons are seen in the head winds and adverse currents, and when it is difficult to pull the boat over a rapid; rice is then thrown overboard to feed the hungry ghosts. The boatmen will rarely tell you how far they are from a certain place, lest the demons should know of their whereabouts, while the distance is generally given as so many stages. They will never tell you where they intend to stay for the night or how far away is an anchorage, lest the demons should waylay them. The custom of boatmen whistling and howling for the wind is a curious one and probably has to do with the idea that the spirits are in the wind and are helping them. In the bottom of each boat there is one division lower than the others, called the *t'ai p'ing ts'ang*, into which all the leakage water in the bottom of the boat is expected to flow, to be ladled out into the river; no one may shout or swear while in this division lest the boat should be wrecked. The words *kuai* (拐), and *ch'iung* (傾), are used to take the places of *huai* (壞), wreck, and *tao* (倒), to empty out. The exact number of trackers should never be counted for fear it should bring disaster. Boatmen never tread on the front of the boat, and care should be taken to avoid this as much as possible by any one. Boatmen always sleep across the boat and never dress standing on their bedding.

Woodmen employed in the forest never call any of their comrades by name before breakfast. Nor are they called to breakfast lest one of them should be called upon to die before the evening. Anyone daring to dress standing on his bed, or knocking his chopsticks together may be fined to the extent of food and tea for a meal, as these things indicate that the axe-head may slip off and kill someone. The water in which

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

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the vegetables were cooked must not be poured out until after the breakfast has been eaten, lest someone's blood should be spilt that day. Any of the unlucky words, such as have already been given, are not tolerated till after breakfast at least. Chair coolies do not like any one to step over the front bar of the sedan chair lest they should get sore shoulders; for women to do this is very unlucky; it is also very unlucky to step across a coolie's carrying pole, for the same reason. Coolies often throw their worn-out sandals on to the roof of the houses lest people should gather and burn them; when their feet would become blistered. Women are never allowed to sleep upstairs at a Chinese inn. If a man has no intention of selling his cow, he objects to anyone looking at it lest the animal should become unsettled and bellow or take sick and die. A horse may be looked at by a would-be purchaser, but the animal may not be ridden unless the owner is prepared to part with him. It is also reckoned unlucky to look at fat pigs with a view to purchase until the owner is prepared to part with them. A three-hoofed pig, a cow with three teats, or one with spots on its head, or with black marks under the tail or in the mouth is reckoned very unlucky. The advent of a flock of sparrows is a sign of poverty.

The advent of crows foreshadows luck and prosperity to the family; crows are reckoned filial birds because they cherish their aged. If they leave the family grove it betokens poverty and fire. Owls are reckoned to be unlucky because it is said that they devour their aged. It is said that the owl flies with his head exalted and his wickedness fills the heavens. Their call heralds death and fine weather. Magpies are reckoned to be lucky and filial birds. If the swallow's brood is five in number, it is reckoned that the floods will come in the fifth moon.

If a dog sneezes it is believed that fine weather is about to come. If you laugh at a dog it will rain. If a person is bitten by a dog he asks for a hair of the dog; this is singed and applied to the wound. To dream of being bitten by a mad dog is as bad if not worse than being actually bitten by one.

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 South-est China AF16

784 If a person sneezes, the first thing he will say is "Who is
777 speaking about me?" If a person's ears ring, some evil is being spoken of him. If ears burn a law suit is impending. A burning face indicates the loss of property. The god of the bed is worshipped on the moving from one house to another, and when a new bed is brought, in order that peaceful slumbers may come to the family. Soldiers sharpen their swords once yearly on the thirteenth of the fifth moon. Kites are flown by men on the ninth of the ninth moon as a medium for carrying off evil influences from the home. If a kite should fall on any person's house it is reckoned to be very unlucky and no one would dare to go and claim it. Children often wear a small mirror on the front of their hats in order that the demons may see their ugly faces and depart.

If a man should dream that he has swallowed the sun and moon or pearls, he will eventually have a rich son. To dream of much water is to get great riches. To dream of fire is to get honours by learning. People who are troubled by evil dreams go and tie a knot on a shrub known as the *mêng hua*, dream flower. If an old man has a red nose it is the sign of the greatest happiness. If the house is infested with rats, many people keep what is called a *shên mao êrh*, or spirit cat, pasted up in the kitchen. This is also called a Kien chou (簡州) *mao êrh* because they are made at that place. This is simply the picture of a cat painted on a piece of yellow paper. It is reckoned very unlucky to howl or shout on a hill-top as a gale of wind and rain may follow.

The terror of the nine-headed monster (蟲) is great in some places. This would appear to be a flock of wild geese flying in the shape of the character nine. If these pass over a city at night many people rush out of doors to drive them off as it is believed that if it drops pus, the family will become poor; if it drops blood, the whole family will die.

The Chinese believe that there is such a monster and the contention of the heads for the ascendancy makes it drop blood.

789 Houses whose doors open on some public path sometimes have wooden screens set up in front of the doors to keep

203 757 A word is to be said about the sources of these medical and moral prescriptions. The moral ones are usually from some god who "spoke or wrote through a certain unsuspected medium, who lived in such and such a far away place" (only village name given, usually not checkable). The medical ones are of varied sources. One prescription states in the end thatit is from "a famous medical officer in the army", but neither the name of the officer nor the name of the disseminator is given. Another poster is signed by a man named Ho and states that the prescription is taken from the Morning Post, Kunming. A third, which is signed by the "Old man of later happiness", as mentioned before, states that the prescription was received from a fairy in the middle of the Ch'ing Dynasty during a great epidemic in Kuei Chow Province. The other prescriptions state no sources, but on inquiring the author was again and again told by the man in the street, "it is handed down to us from our ancestors or since generations past."

3. Individual Precautions

751 So far we have dealt with measures that are more or less communal. There are other measures of an individual or family nature, which may or may not bear on the community as a whole. When the epidemic becomes noticeable, practically all families do one of two things: either hang a palm-shaped cactus stalk over the portal to the family home or stamp one or more hand prints on the gates and walls. The latter are secured by dipping the hand in decomposed limestone and then pressing the palm against the object on which the print is desired. The idea behind this practice is simple: The Chinese name for palm-shaped cactus is Fairy Palm, and since the epidemic is caused by evil spirits, the sign of hands of fairies or superior deities will be enough to scare the disease-causing spirits away. The line hand prints serve the same purpose. There is also a similar but less common practice of drawing a long line on the walls of each family in their entire lengths. The idea about this is not so clear, but vaguely it is also to scare the spirits away.

A second practice is to draw a semi-circle with lime powder connecting the two front lintels of the family portal. The author has not been able to ascertain whether the practice is of modern origin. Some of the local people who answered his query said that it was to keep out the spirits just as did the palm-shaped cactus stalks. Others said that it was the same idea as the spreading of lime powder in and around toilets in the missionary college and the hospital.

● 784 751 The third measure[1] is the automatic taboo on many varieties of food stuff. Food which is normally served in the streets and eaten cold, like pea-curd and bean-custard (not bean-curd) are not eaten at all because, the local people say, "they make the abdomen cold." For the same reason, any vegetable or fruit which is customarily regarded as "cold-producing" is also tabooed. The list of tabooed foods is as follows: potato (the price of which dropped all of a sudden from three dollars to fifty cents a catty), string beans, turnip, all sour fruit (plums in particular, because they are in season), confections, new wheat flour, fresh peat, fish (the pious will not touch any meat or fish, even preserved [12]). Others are less stringent in their

(12) When a woman goes to prayers on one of the regular ritual days she will wash herself from hair to toe and will not touch meat or fish at all for the day. Not even to handle it.

[1] [against epidemic cholera -- Analyst]

observances), pumpkin, egg plant, etc. It will be noted that this list includes practically all fresh fruit and vegetables from the field except cabbage, garlic, pepper and a few others.(13) 784 751

The fourth measure concerns the washing of clothes and of food stuffs. As stated before, the area is full of streams formed by water running down the mountain side before reaching the lake. As West Town is some distance from the foot of the mountains, most of these streams have run through several villages before reaching West Town. In these streams practically all villagers and residents in West Town wash their clothes, food stuffs before cooking or eating raw, and everything else that wants washing. Since all the villages through which these streams run use them for such purposes, the great danger involved is very apparent. When the epidemic becomes evident, practically all families automatically abstain from using these streams. 744 784

When asked about the reason the answer is that the measure is to clean up the area for the gods, because by washing clothes and food in these streams the people will have polluted the water which runs down from the Ts'ang mountains (where the God of Mountains resides) to Er Lake (where the God Dragon and his family reside).

This same reason -- to clean up the area for gods - is also applied to the next two things. One is the sweeping up of dirt and the prohibition of animal soil in the streets; the other is that each family heaps up a dump of twigs, etc., in front of its portal and starts a thick smoke which lasts for hours every day. Normally, as we have seen, nobody cares to sweep the streets even within the area in which his own walls extend. The dirt heaps up or scatters about anywhere and the excrements left by animals passing through the streets are only collected by farmers for their store of fertilizer. Now animals are simply not allowed within the confines of the town. 203 744 784

This prohibition is announced in two types of notices: one by the local police bureau and another by the officers in charge of the various prayer meetings. The former puts up a set of notices everywhere in the town which reads as follows:

"Letting loose animals, or throwing about night soil or dirt, is strictly forbidden. The offender will be prosecuted without leniency."

Signed (seal), the Experimental
Police Bureau, West Town.
(14th of May, 1942)

The second type of notices appears in every village or section of the town where a cholera prayer meeting is taking place. They usually read as follows:

"Pray and Abstain with all Earnestness,
"Dirt and Uncleanliness are Forbidden."

The smoking dumps in front of family portals are made of twigs, grass, 744 784

(13) The word "cold" here used has little to do with the temperature as in the West. It refers to an inner coldness which is only defined traditionally. Dr. Shen (F.P.), professor of medicine in the National Yunnan University, says that what the traditional Chinese call "cold" food is probably diarrhea-causing food.

744 moxa leaves, barley stalks, pine needles and some dirt swept up from the area
784 in front of each family portal. When the twigs are lit the flame is stopped from shooting out by the other materials which are usually damp. This gives a thick smoke and a kind of fragrance which permeate the air.

As stated above, this smoking and the sweeping of streets are to clean up the area, not for human habitation but for the gods and spirits. They are thus means to a spiritual rather than bodily cleanliness. That this conception has nothing to do with modern ideas of sanitation may be seen from the fact that when a family woman goes to read scriptures or pray in a temple (a practice very common and frequent among elderly women in the entire district), she washes herself clean from hair to toes and will only touch meat or fish after the visit is over. She never takes a bath otherwise. When asked, a woman says that if she is not "clean" she will offend the gods or goddesses to which she is going to pray.

751 A fifth measure is the use of amulets. While the biggest cholera prayer meeting is taking place at Area H (Center of the town), each family secures an amulet (disseminated by individuals and obtainable at many native dispensaries) and hangs it on the family portal. Then on the fourth evening of the prayer the Wen God "inspects" the entire town and its surrounding villages in a procession consisting of regular policemen, buglers, guards and priests. The guards in this procession take down the amulet from each family portal as the procession passes by and hang it one by one on a driller-like thing in the right hand of the image of the god. They are then burned with the god and the dragon boat mentioned before. These amulets have the function of catching any Wen spirit which may attempt to dash into the family home. The Wen God, who had formerly let them forth, has thus collected them back. But there are other amulets and paraphernalia on family portals. Some of the family portals carry as many as five or six amulets from different sources. Practically all of them are bought from some priest at a price. A study of the elements contained in these amulets is not in order here. Suffice it to say that many of them are reiterations of the desired object (many amulets contain the characters Chieh Chieh, or relieving the disaster) while others write many times such characters as Sun, Fire, Water, Thunder, which usually represent the power to strike at evil spirits.

Following instruction of some priests, some families put one red flag on each lintel of the family portal as well. On both flags are written, "The heavenly priest protect us, diseases are wiped out", or "Fatal disasters vanish". The same ideas are then written on other pieces of red paper and posted on the gates and walls. One such paper says: "The heavenly priest is here, all evil spirits keep away." The families in one village particularly (Area P) hang straw dragons in addition to red flags of cloth on the lintels of their family portals. These, the villagers say, are for scaring away the Wen spirits, too. The presence of straw dragons in this village and their absence in other villages are interesting. It may be because this village is closer to the lake where the dragon god resides.

757 All these are individual measures of relief or precaution, but the most common and popular form of individual action is to secure "medicine" or "fairy water" from almost any source: temple, sacred spots, private individuals or dispensaries. We have seen some of the prescriptions, notices of charitable medicine, and moral advice posted for the benefit of the public. From the impressive quantity of such posters in the town and the villages and from the fact that many people secure the ready-made medicine given out

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

757 As stated before, all of the doings described in Chapter IV of this paper happened within the duration of the epidemic - about one month. Some occurred simultaneously. For example, the dates of several prayer meetings overlapped each other. And the prayer meetings were held as the volunteer prescriptions and moral advice spread. Some are supplementary to others. For example, the purification of the air by smoke, the cleaning up of the streets, the abstenance from meat and fish, and the disuse of the streams for washing purposes were all supplementary to the prayer meetings. They are means of avoiding the displeasure of the gods whose help is being invoked.

[744] Cleanliness, both public and private, as the modern world understands it, is not customary. And the relation of cleanliness to the avoidance of "choleric bacteria" is not at all conceivable in the culture.

[784] The taboo on a large number of vegetables and fruit may be said to be based upon sanitary ideas of a sort, but it is a sort different from what the modern man is accustomed to think of as scientific knowledge.

Closer to modern knowledge are some of the medicinal prescriptions. The analysis of their composition, as we have seen, shows that many elements would be effective in beating down the disease. But other prescriptions may be entirely useless or even fatal to the patient. The method of opening up finger tips to let out blood, for example, leads to bad infection and may render futile any application of modern treatment by serum. The drinking of the so-called "fairy water" from a cave in a hill is another alarming example. It may simply increase the rate of infection to a tremendous extent, and provide stimulus to such practices, as we have seen, as drinking unboiled water springing from an incense burner converted into a fountain.

The situation may be further analyzed, as in the following diagram:

DIAGRAM I

Measures resorted to	Expected or Unexpected Results	Domain of the effect
Taboos on food (potato, string beans, turnip, all sour fruit, confections, new wheat flour, fresh meat, fish, pumpkin, egg plant, etc.)	Ex.: "To please the gods" "To avoid making abdomen cold" Un.: Sanitation, or arrestation of the growth of the bacillus	Spiritual or Physical (the latter may be good or indifferent)
Taboo on dirt and animal and human soil in streets	Ex.: "To make the air and place clean for gods" Un.: Sanitation	Spiritual or Physical (the latter is definitely good)
Insistence on morals	Ex.: "To purify the heart and so please the gods"	Spiritual